1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

While white rice is used in auspicious ritual, rice yellowed with turmeric is used in inauspicious ritual. At the very important funeral rite of 'breaking the pot', each of the mourners sprinkles a little rice, yellowed with turmeric, on the corpse before saluting it.

The ritual sprinkling of rice on objects and persons usually accompanies salutation. In *mūrta*, the sprinkling of rice occurs with salutation and with the giving of milk and money presents. All these rites affirm a bond which exists between the subject and all those who perform them to him. These are members of his kin-group, caste-group, and village. They constitute his community. These rites of solidarity which affirm the existence of a bond between the subject and the community serve also to stress the importance of the particular *mangala* the subject is undergoing.

It is entirely proper that rice and not any other grain or article should be used in the most common solidarity rite in Coorg. Even today rice has a very important place in the social and economic life of Coorgs, and formerly, before the introduction of coffee and oranges into Coorg, it was the most valuable crop.[1]

XI

The ritual of giving milk to the subject follows the sprinkling of rice on him. This, like the other ritual acts mentioned earlier, is performed at every *mangala* including marriage. While the structure of every *mangala* is, broadly speaking, the same, there are minor differences between one *mangala* and another. The ritual giving of milk at marriage makes the meaning of ritual milk-giving particularly clear.

On the first day of marriage *mūrta* is performed separately for the bride and groom *in their respective homes*. The bride's relatives and the high-caste members of her village perform *mūrta* to her *in her house*, and the groom's relatives and members of his village perform *mūrta* to him *in his house*.

On the second day, the groom's relatives go in state to the bride's house, and the groom's relatives perform *mūrta* to the bride. For this purpose *they carry some of their own rice and milk with them*.

The bride's relatives perform *mūrta* to the groom and, finally,

[1] Among the Brahmins of south India the assembled priests and relatives bless the bridal pair by sprinkling on them rice yellowed with turmeric.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

of 'reversal' operates in some instances while 'identity' operates in some others? If the principle of 'reversal' had been consistently carried out in the above instance, the mourners should have gone round an even number of times.

White rice grains are used in auspicious ritual, whereas rice grains yellowed with turmeric powder are used in inauspicious ritual. This is not the same as 'reversal' though akin to it. It is called 'confinement' here: certain ritual acts are confined to mourning and they may not be performed on auspicious occasions.

A mango or *pavili* tree which is growing in the burial-ground, and green, is cut down for the funeral pyre. The *entire tree* has to be used for cremating the corpse. If a branch or twig remains over, a chicken is killed and cremated with it. It is inauspicious not to use up the entire tree. Similarly, if a grave which is being dug has to be abandoned and another has to be started, a chicken is buried in the former. Otherwise there will be another death in the house in the near future.

The leaves of the *bainé* palm (*caryota urens*) are associated with death: on the day before *māda* a *pandal* is put up before the mourning-house and the roof of the *pandal* is covered with *bainé* leaves. The corpse is fanned with a fan of *bainé* leaves. Again, when a man without relatives wants to have his obsequies performed during his lifetime alone, a *pandal* of *bainé* leaves is put up before his house.

While *bainé* leaves are used exclusively in funeral ritual, toddy is used on all kinds of ritual occasions. Systematization has not been carried to the extent of confining *all* products of the *bainé* palm to funeral ritual.

Rice yellowed with turmeric is sprinkled all along the way from the mourning-house to the place where the corpse is buried. Usually a man sprinkles the rice with his hands as he accompanies the funeral procession to the burial-ground. Sometimes, however, the rice is put into a bag and loaded on a pack-bullock. Two tiny holes are bored in this bag and the bullock is driven behind the corpse to the burial-ground. The bullock may not be used for any other purpose subsequently.

On the day before *māda*, first-grade mourners offer to the spirit of the dead person rice mixed with curd, plantain, and *ghī*. A quantity of this mixture is carried by him to the 'sacrificial post' in front of the mourning-house and placed on the plank on top of

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

ed a passage to the immigrants from Malabar. From the above facts, it may be gathered that they were not an unmixed race. The house names of some of the Coorg families indicate Mysore, Tulus or Tamil origin. Their language, demon and ancestor-worship do tend to show that they belong to the Dravidian. Their traits are biologically useful and related to mental capacity and intellectual endowment. Their mountain habitat, climate, food and occupation are responsible for what they are at present, and these factors have differentiated them from the people of the plains. 174

Habitation

The Coorg houses are like those of the Nayars of Kerala. They are situated by the side of their paddy fields on a sheltering slope of Bane-land, surrounded by plantain trees, bastard sago, orange, jack and guava trees. A coffee garden and a small plot of land for the growth of vegetables are not absent on the Hittelmandala land. There is a small pond well stocked with fish. The position and type of building bear an analogy to those of the Nayars of Kerala. The approaches to the Coorg house strongly mark the design of fortification, and tradition goes back to a time of general feuds, when chief fought against chief and clan with clan. Deep trenches with high embankments are visible memorials to the warlike state of affairs in days gone by. These trenches intersect the mountainous district in every direction. 351 342 [171] [137] [245] [712]

A deeply cut passage paved with rough stones and overgrown with shady trees, its sloping side walls decked with a variety of ferns, leads one in angular lines to a doorway passing under an outhouse. Houses are located in the midst of their plantations remote from the public gaze. A paved courtyard is surrounded by stables, store rooms, and servants' quarters, in front of which is the main quadrangular building which has one storey and is raised about three feet from the ground. All the buildings are roofed with bamboo and thatched with rice straw which is annually repaired and renewed. There is an open square hall in the centre known as batte or nandumane, the four sides of which are provided with rooms for the inmates to occupy. In front of the building there is an open verandah which is the reception hall. It is raised and covered with a wooden plank almirah two or three feet broad, so as to form convenient seats for the male members and visitors. From it rise three or four wooden pillars square, round and tapering, and sometimes carved. The floor is well beaten with mud and cleaned with cowdung. The ceiling is of wood, arranged in small compartments. In some, the verandah is separated from the inner hall by a wall with a sort of window or lattice made of wood. It is a contrivance intended for the benefit of the Coorg women who are curious to see visitors. On the right side of the verandah there is a main [824] [356] 342 [237]

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

824
771
291
782

Tree Worship

243
796

Huttari Festival

[Facing p. 64]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

interspersed with such trees, as are peculiar to these localities. The flora of Coorg is almost identical with that of Southern India. It is of course beyond the scope of this Gazetteer and equally beyond the knowledge of the compiler, to attempt anything like a full description of the Coorg flora; we can only glance at its distinguishing features and enumerate a few species, that are of practical value, reserving those which fall under the care of the agri-horticulturist for a special consideration.

The first collection of Coorg plants appears to have been made by Captains Munroe and Gough, who probably placed their collections at the disposal of the famous botanist Dr. Wight. Mr. Metz, a German missionary on the Nilagiris, also collected a good many plants about Mercara, which were afterwards distributed in Germany by Hohenacker and named by Miquel. In Major Heber Drury's book on "Useful Plants" and Dr. Bidie's "Timber Trees of India" (1862) much information is given about the principal timber-trees in Coorg.

Looking upon Coorg with the eye of the forester, rather than that of the general botanist, the most superficial survey will not fail to discover invaluable treasures of timber trees and their produce, scattered all over the province. Small as the country is, there are nevertheless distinct tracts with trees peculiar to them. The two prominent zones are by the Coorgs called Male-kádu or Hill-forests and Kanive-kádu or Hillock-jungles (Kanive, a ridge between paddy-fields, hillock). Botanically they may perhaps be determined as evergreen and deciduous forests, the former clothing the Ghats, the latter the eastern hill-tracts.

All along the slopes of the Ghats the Poon spar—"Calophyllum augustifolium"—rules as king of the forest. When full grown, it is often upwards of 100 feet in height, its wood is clean, tough and elastic and there is perhaps no other tree so well suited in every respect for making ship's spars and masts.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

*136 The fact is, that, as the jackal eats only the ripest berries, the beans are naturally of a good quality.

The mungoose or Ichneumon Múngos (Viverra mungo *Can.* kíra)—is frequently found on the bánes, where it is seen running from one copse to another. Its elongated, slender body with pearly, ash-grey fur and thick long tail, its pointed head and bright eyes and its rapid movements give it a pretty appearance, and, but for its wanton depredations amongst the poultry, it might become a useful pet, as [824] it destroys rats and snakes. The natives say that after its struggle with a poisonous snake, it takes recourse to the Nágadále (Ruta, Rue) the leaves of which act as an antidote.

Black bears (*Can.* karadi) are found in Marenád on the Pushpagiri, Kóte-betta and Kálur-betta, where there are colonies of beehives, for Master Bruin is very fond of honey. [262] His flesh is not eaten, but pieces of his skin are attached to [789] the necks of horses and cows, to keep off the evil eye. [231]

On the wooded banks of the Hatti and Shóran-hole and elsewhere there are small colonies of a species of otter-hound, which the natives call Nírunái or water-dog (Lutra Nair Cuv.) The animal is deep reddish brown on the back, lightest on the sides and below, lives in artificial burrows and subsists on fish, which it catches with great skill. It is eaten by the Yerawas.

Mice and *rats* there are more of in Coorg, than the farmer and house-owner would wish. The musk-rat betrays itself by its piercing shriek, but has a safeguard in its strong smell against its pursuing enemies. Great havoc has been done on some coffee plantations by the bamboo-rat (Golunda Ellioti) which is gregarious and for want of jungle-food often attacks in great numbers the coffee shrub, selecting the tender and succulent shoots and, to get at them, cutting off the primaries near the stem. Most wary of traps of any kind, this destructive animal is difficult to deal with. The field-rat (*Can.*

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

valley, having a rivulet running through them are called "Beilu-gadde," and those terraced up along the sides and chiefly depending on the rainfall are named "Maki-gadde." 243

The rice cultivated throughout Coorg and in general use is the large grained "Dodda-batta", which is also exported. A finer and more agreeable kind is the small rice "Sanna-batta" and a red variety the Késari; for parched rice they use the "Kalame". [439]

Except in a few valleys in North-Coorg, there is annually but one rice crop, but its return is so rich, that the ryots may well be satisfied and allow their wretched cattle rest and their fields to lie fallow or to "sun themselves," as the natives say, for the remainder of the year. Whilst in the low country and also in some parts of North-Coorg the average return of one crop is from 10 to 25 fold, that in most parts of Coorg proper is from 40 to 60 fold, and in seasons of extraordinary fertility even from 80 to 100 fold, which exceeds by far the famous fertility of Egypt! 243 433

The agricultural implements are few and of the rudest kind. The plough, constructed by the ryot himself, consists of a Sampige-wood ploughshare, with an iron point, a handle of Pali-wood and a pole of palm wood for the yoke, and is so light, that the farmer carries it to the field on his shoulders. Its value hardly exceeds one rupee. The Tawe which answers to our English harrow is generally a simple board to which a split bamboo is fastened to connect it with the yoke. The driver standing on the board adds to the efficiency of the operation, be it for pulverizing dry ground, as in the Múdu-shime or eastern district, or smoothing and levelling the wet fields. A strong sickle and a mamoti or hoe complete the stock of farming utensils. To cultivate 100 butties of land, which is equivalent to an area yielding 100 butties at 80 seers by measure of paddy, or rice in the husk, a farmer requires either a pair of bullocks, or a pair of buffaloes, one 407 [824] [412] 243 492

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

lion mouthed shape, marked with purple-violet stripes in the centre. The numerous angular black seeds are closely packed in oval trivalvular capsules of a yellowish white colour and, if bruised, have a pungent aromatic taste. On this account and for their cordial, stimulant properties they are much in use as an agreeable spice and as a cough and vomiting allaying medicine. 249 [263] [757]

The capsules ripen in September or October, when the crop is gathered and being the first, is dedicated to the deity and called Déva-cottu (God's gift). A full harvest, however, is collected only in the fourth year and the plants may continue to yield a good crop for seven successive years, when on their decline they are reinvigorated by the felling of another tree on the top of them. According to the number of fruit-bearing racemes on one stem, which amount from one to four, the crop is estimated as a quarter, half, three quarters and a full crop. The perennial stem of the full grown plant is erect, jointed and from 6 to 9 feet high and enveloped in the sheaths of the 1 to 2 feet long lanceolate leaves. [782]

The yearly gathering of the cardamoms is attended with much hardship, especially when the gardens are not in Umalea, i. e. hills near the úru or village, but far away in the Gademales. The high and sharp edged hill-grass is in October infested by innumerable leeches and poisonous snakes.

The cardamom gatherers, consisting of a party of Coorgs with their coolies of the Páleya, Kudiya, Yerava and Kuraba caste, (the Holeyas are not permitted to set their foot on those grounds) first set up a camp near the garden. A hut thatched with the long hill-grass is erected. At night a fire is kindled and the men sleep around it. Early in the morning they are at their work. One party clears the ground of weeds, the other cuts the fruit branches. Each man gathers a good load into his leafy basket formed of the Netti-mara and returns To the hut before sunset. [648] [415] [824]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

245 round the stalk, it forms a large bunch numbering from 200
[262] to 300 plantains. The fruit when divested of its skin may be
[251] eaten raw, roasted or baked, or when sliced and dried in the sun, reduced to a kind of flour which is considered very nourishing.

The fruit is supposed to have been the forbidden fruit of Paradise, hence the botanical name of the plant. There is a great variety of plantains, which differ in size, colour and the flavour of their fruit, but all the Coorg plantains seem to be particularly rich in saccharine matter and very nutritious.

[824] The plant is highly esteemed by the natives as the emblem of plenty and fertility and is as such in constant requisition at their marriage and other festivals for ornamenting the entrance of houses and temples. Stumps of large trunks occupy also a conspicuous place in their games and amusements, for it is considered a feat of strength to cut one through at a blow with the famous Coorg knife.

248 The *Musa textilis* or "*Manilla Hemp*" Plantain has been
139 introduced by Captain Cole, and I have successfully naturalized it in Mercara. Numbers of shoots have already been distributed for extensive cultivation for the sake of its valuable fibre for cloth and paper-manufacture. The fruit is like the common large plantain, but so full of seeds that it can hardly be eaten.

Along with this plant also *the Rheea or Assam Nettle* (Boehmeria nivea) was introduced, and having successfully reared it in Mercara, I distributed a quantity of roots and cuttings amongst the planters all over Coorg, who find it thriving very well in their sheltered ravines without any further care, but do not yet see how to make the cultivation profitable, owing to the difficulty and expense in preparing the fibre. The plant is indigenous to south-eastern Asia and is known in China as Ma or Chuma and in Assam as Rheea. It is a herbaceous plant, with large, perennial, spreading and

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

3. SOCIAL LIFE OF THE COORGS.

a. The Coorg house.

342 361 [241] The Coorg houses are generally situated close to their paddy-fields on a sheltering slope of Bâne land, surrounded by clumps of plantain trees, sago and betel-nut palms and [231] other fruit-bearing trees. A coffee garden and a small plot for the growth of native vegetables are seldom absent, and, where the locality is favourable, a little tank well stocked with 361 712 fish is not uncommon. The position, the style of building and the approaches of old Coorg houses strongly remind one [342 173] of small fortifications, and tradition points back to a time of general feuds, when chief fought with chief, clan with clan. In the deep cadangas or ditches with high banks, we still see [726] memorials of that warlike state of affairs. These war-ditches intersect the mountainous districts in every direction, and resisted not only many a furious attack of contending parties, but also the force of the annual monsoon.

351 342 A deeply cut passage, paved with rough stones and overgrown with shady trees, and the sloping side walls decked with a variety of luxuriant ferns, leads you in angular lines to the doorway, passing under an out-house. Over a paved courtyard, on three sides enclosed by stables, store-rooms and servants' quarters, you come to the front of the main building, which is a square of one story and raised about 3 feet above 342 the ground. All the buildings are roofed with bamboos, and [824] thatched with rice-straw. Considering that there is an open square hall in the centre of the house, called nadumane there remain the four sides only for habitable quarters. The front side however is reserved for an open verandah—the reception hall. Near to the right end the principal door leads to the inner rooms, which are all dark, opening only by a small door into the inner square, which is lit by the sky-light formed

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

one, who must hold this rope. A piece of wood, generally of a creeper called Odi, is cut into seven parts, which are called Chandu, i. e. balls. The man holding the rope puts six of these balls in a circle round the peg at a distance of the rope's length, the seventh is deposited close by the peg. The whole company now endeavours to pick off the balls without being touched by their guardian. The player in the centre, always keeping the rope's end in one hand, turns round and round, and tries to touch some one of the aggressors. If he succeed, the person touched must take his place and the play recommences. When six balls are abstracted, the seventh must be moved to the distance of one foot from the peg. When this also is lost, the man has to run through the whole crowd and escape, without being caught, to the Musicians' place. If he reach this asylum in safety, the play is won and finished. If he be caught on his way, he is brought before the Nettle-man, an officer of the play-court, who has been waiting all the time, a long Angare-stick—a large fierce nettle—in his hand, for the victim. His hands and feet are well touched and the play ends. Now the assembly perform different kinds of plays and dances, representing the wars which in ancient times appear to have been waged between people of different districts. A man is wounded; a physician is called, who prescribes for him. Another wounded man dies, and Holeyas are called to invite his friends to the funeral. A scene of demoniacal possession is acted. The funeral is performed. Now stories are told of incredibilities. "I saw the other day a little hare attacking a tiger and breaking its neck." Reply: "Did you? I saw a buffaloe flying over the mountains," etc. Three men invoke again Ayappa, Mahádéva and Bhagavati. Dances follow, accompanied by the beating of sticks keeping time with the music of the band outside. Feats of gymnastic strength and agility follow, and another invocation of the three deities concludes the performance.

796 526 [824] 796 536 796 [538] [782] [535] [526] [782]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

formance. The Huttari takes place on the full moon. Early in the morning before dawn, a quantity of Ashvatha (ficus religiosa), Kumbali and Keku (wild trees) leaves, some hundred of each for great houses, together with a piece of a creeper, called Inyoli, and some fibrous bark called Achchi, are collected and deposited in a shady place for the use of the evening. During the day, the house is cleansed, brass vessels are scoured, and every thing wears the appearance of a great holiday. Beggars come and are dismissed with presents. The Méda brings the Huttari basket, the potter the little Huttari pot, the blacksmith a new sickle, the carpenter a new spoon, the Holeya a new mat. Each carries off his Huttari portion of rice and plantains. The astrologer follows, to communicate the exact time of the full moon, and claims his share of the Huttari bounty. The cattle are washed and scrubbed, for once; the menial servants have an extra allowance of rice; breakfast and dinner are served to the family. At sunset the whole house prepares for a hot bath. The precedence is given to the person whom the astrologer has chosen in the morning for the ceremony of cutting the first sheaves. On his return from bathing, he repairs to the threshing floor, spreads the Huttari mat, and, while the rest are engaged in their ablutions, cuts the Inyoli creeper into small pieces, rolls each piece into an Ashvatha, a Kumbali and a Keku leaf, in the fashion of a native cherroot, and ties up the little bundle with a bit of Achchi fibre. All the bundles are placed in the Huttari basket. Now the women take a large dish, strew it with rice, and place a lighted lamp in it. This done, the whole household march towards the fields; the dish with the lamp is carried in front; the sheaf-cutter follows with basket and sickle in one hand, and a bamboo bottle of fresh milk in the other. Arrived at the chosen spot, the young man binds one of the leaf scrolls from his basket to a bush of rice, and pours milk into it. He cuts

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

rest is cooked in the house, to which the Keimada is attached, and is consumed by the whole community with a plentiful addition of liquor. At noon the ceremonies are completed. When Bárani only is performed, one of the strange priests does the whole work, but in the Kólas several are engaged. A peculiar kind of illumination is essential to both Kóla and Bárani. Some plantain trees are split into thin strips. These are placed on the ground in three or four layers, crossing at right angles, and forming a kind of network. Twenty-four or forty-eight or ninety-six such strips of split plantain-stems are used. Where they cross one another, spikes of a reed, called Wotté, are driven through them into the ground. At the upper end of these spikes, which are two or three feet high, pieces of cloth are fastened, twisted into wicks and well moistened with oil. When the whole net is thus arranged, two layers of strips are raised, one to near the top of the spikes, the other a foot lower. Between the crossings, plantain-leaf-pieces are placed, upon which quantities of rice, plain and fried, of arecanut, jaggory, etc. are put. When the ceremony begins, a few of the oiled wicks are lighted. At the pig-sacrifice all are kindled, and the whole square blazes up like a table of fire, without however consuming the offerings placed on the leaves, which are the perquisite of the performers.

Besides, every family has some spot on the estate, in a retired part of the jungle-land, where a sacrifice of a fowl is offered every year to the departed by the living members of the house. No strangers are permitted to attend on these occasions. A stone placed on a rough mound serves as altar.

On the day of *Sivarâtri* a religious ceremony takes place in Mercara at the Rajahs' tombs, that of Dodda-Virájender being transformed into a temple, where the spirit of the hero is worshipped with the honors due to the saint or rather a god, for Virájender has been deified by the Lingaites. On